DC

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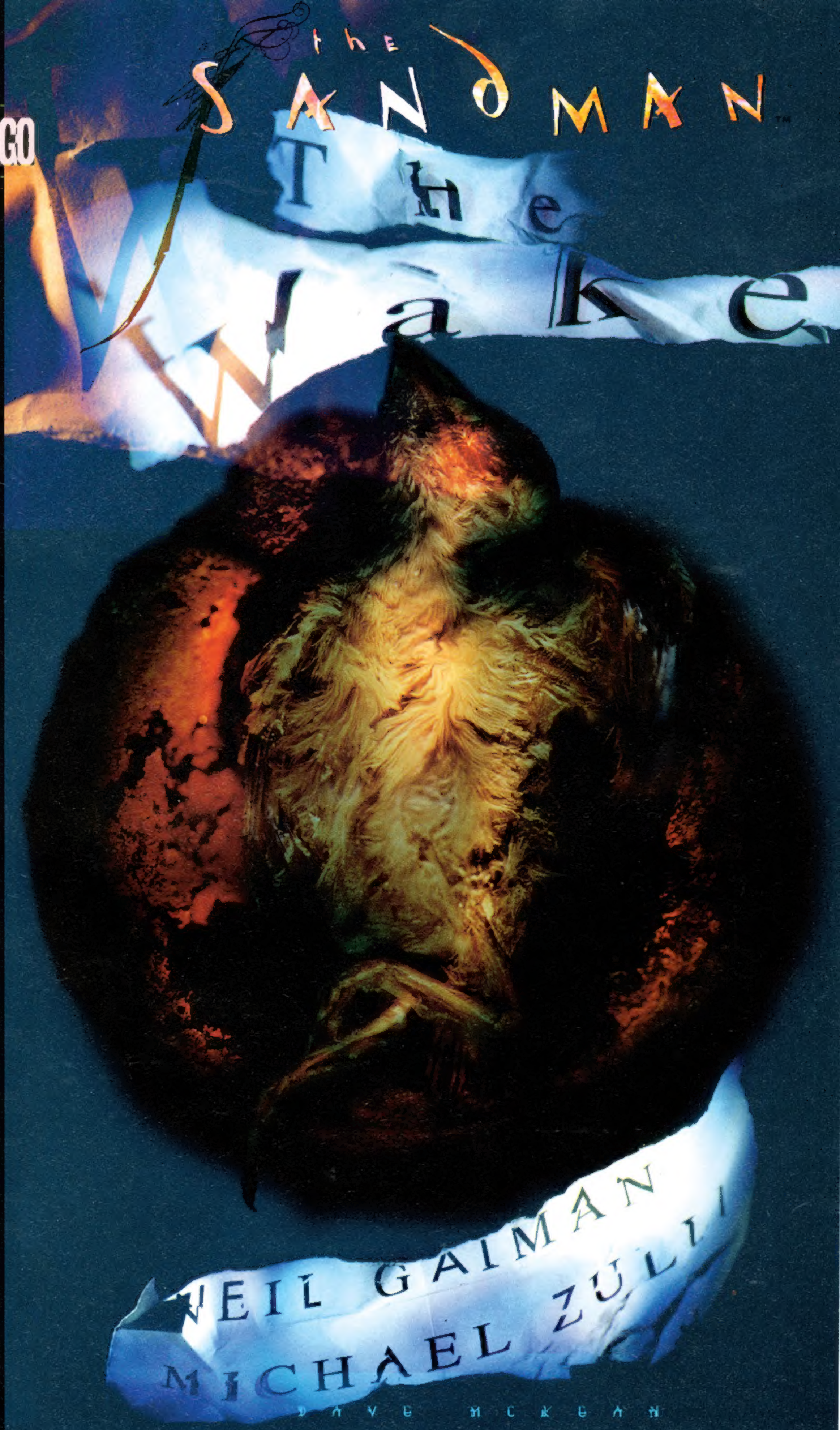
NO. 71
SEP 95

SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS

the SANDMAN™

The Wake



NEIL GAIMAN

MICHAEL ZULLI

DAVE MCKEAN

SOMEWHERE IN THE NIGHT, ENTITIES BIGGER THAN STORM-CLOUDS ARE BUILDING A HOUSE OF REMEMBRANCE.

THE PEOPLE ON THE GROUND ARE WAITING FOR THE BUILDING TO BE FINISHED BEFORE THEY GO INSIDE.

THEY WAIT AWKWARDLY, SHUFFLING AND MAKING SMALL-TALK, IN THE WASTE-LAND THAT WAS ONCE THE HEART OF THE DREAMING.

EVERYBODY'S HERE.

YOU'RE HERE.

Chapter Two: In Which a Wake is Held

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DO YOU HAVE A HANDKERCHIEF?

I DON'T KNOW.

I HAVE A PIECE OF CLOTH FROM THE CURTAINS THAT HUNG OVER MY BED AS A CHILD.

I REMEMBER THE WAY THE SUNLIGHT WOULD CREEP OVER AND TOUCH IT, IN THE MORNING.

THIS WAS THE FRIENDLY CURTAIN, THE ONE ON THE RIGHT. THE ONE ON THE LEFT I KNEW SOMEHOW WAS UN-FRIENDLY.

BY THE TIME I WAS THREE OR FOUR I NO LONGER GAVE THE OBJECTS AROUND ME PERSONALITIES. SOON, I FORGOT I HAD EVER DONE SO.

CAN I USE IT?

ARE YOU CRYING?

NO. I'M BLEEDING.

I'M SORRY.

"You have not been an envoy long, then, Mr. O'Shaughnessy?"

NO, LORD. LESS THAN A DAY.

So. It seems I cannot attend the wake.

NOT ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF THE CEREMONY, NO.

THE FAMILY MAY NOT GREET YOU, NOR FORMALLY RECOGNIZE YOU, UNTIL THE FUNERAL MATTERS ARE OVER WITH, AND DONE.

MY LORD. I TOO MUST LEAVE YOU. I ALSO HAVE MY RESPECTS TO PAY.

THE CASTLE WILL REMAIN HERE, BUT EVERYONE ELSE WILL BE GOING TO THE WAKE. PERHAPS I SHOULD STAY, BUT...WELL...

I do not envision any difficulties in your absence, Lucien.

Go, with my blessing.

SIR LIBRARIAN--THE YOUNG LORD IN WHITE ... WHO **WAS** HE?

HE IS DREAM OF THE ENDLESS.

HE IS ...?

BUT THE **WAKE**. THE **CEREMONY**. I WAS TOLD THAT DREAM OF THE ENDLESS WAS NO MORE.

YES.

SO... **WHO** DIED?

NOBODY DIED. HOW CAN YOU KILL AN IDEA? HOW CAN YOU KILL THE PERSONIFICATION OF AN ACTION?

THEN **WHAT** DIED? **WHO** ARE YOU MOURNING?

A **PUH-POINT OF VIEW.**

SECRET! YOU TOLD ANOTHER **SECRET!**

CAIN... NOT TODAY.

YOU--YOU **WITLESS**, JELLY-BELLIED GUSSET-SNIFFING **DUNCE!** I OUGHT TO--

WHEN I FIRST MET HIM,,, HE WAS THE MOST *GALLANT* OF LOVERS.

HE KNEW SO MANY *THINGS*.

HE DELIGHTED IN SHARING HIS KNOWLEDGE. HE HAD A CASTLE FILLED WITH TREASURES, AND HE TOOK SUCH PLEASURE IN SHOWING THEM, GIVING THEM TO ME.

HE WAS SO GENTLE, AND HIS SKIN FELT LIKE WHITE SILK AGAINST MY SKIN.

AND I GAVE WHAT *I* COULD GIVE TO SUCH AS HE.

WHEN WE MADE LOVE IT WAS LIKE A *FLAME*: I FELT UTTERLY ENGULFED, UTTERLY LOVED. *TREASURED*.

I HAVE BEEN WITH MANY POETS, MANY DREAMERS,,,

,,,BUT *HIS* LOVE ALONE WAS *ICE* AND *FIRE*. HIS EYES WERE STARS.

I WOULD NOT *LIVE* WITH HIM. I WANTED MY *OWN* LIFE. IT MADE IT *SPECIAL* WHEN I SAW HIM.

BUT WE HAD BEGUN, SLIGHTLY, TO DRIFT APART WHEN I FOUND MYSELF WITH CHILD.

I *THOUGHT* THE BABY WOULD BRING US CLOSER TOGETHER.

PERHAPS HE *DID* FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

ONEIROS WOULD *PLAY* WITH THE CHILD. HE WOULD TELL IT *TALES*. HE WOULD LISTEN TO ITS SONGS, FASHION MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS FOR THE CHILD TO PLAY.

HE HAD LESS TIME FOR ME.

STILL, I LOVED HIM. AND HE LOVED ME.

I REMEMBER OUR SON'S WEDDING. THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I SAW TROUBLE WITH HIS FAMILY.

THE BOY WAS *FOOLISH*. MY LOVE'S FAMILY... *ENCOURAGED* ORPHEUS'S FOOLISHNESS.

ONEIROS COULD HAVE HELPED THE CHILD...

AFTERWARD... WE DRIFTED APART. I SHOUTED AT HIM, TOLD HIM WHAT I THOUGHT OF HIS BEHAVIOR. TOLD HIM WHAT I THOUGHT OF HIS FAMILY.

I TOLD HIM I HATED HIM. AND I *DID* HATE HIM, ALTHOUGH I *STILL* LOVED HIM.

THAT DAY HE BECAME *COLD* TO ME.

SOMETIME AFTERWARDS, I WENT TO HIS CASTLE FOR THE LAST TIME, BUT THE GUARDIANS ON THE GATE PRETENDED THEY DID NOT KNOW ME, DENIED ME ENTRY. I SWORE AND SCREAMED, BUT THEY WOULD NOT LET ME IN.

I HAD OFFENDED HIM.

I WAS NO LONGER WELCOME IN HIS LIFE. HE HAD CUT ALL TIES TO ME AND TO OUR SON.

I SAW HIM ONE MORE TIME. SEVERAL YEARS AGO. HE FREED ME FROM MY CONFINEMENT AND MY PAIN.

AND, FOR A MOMENT, I COULD HAVE LOVED HIM ONCE MORE.

BUT THE MOMENT PASSED, AND HE WAS NO LONGER THE MAN THAT I HAD LOVED.

I AM NOT HERE TO MOURN HIM.

I MOURNED THE LOSS OF MY LOVE A LONG TIME AGO.

I AM HERE TO SAY GOODBYE TO A STRANGER WHO ONCE DID ME A GOOD TURN.

AND TO THE MAN WHO GAVE MY SON THE DEATH HE CRAVED.

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?

AT DAWN, THEY WILL OPEN THE DOOR TO THE MAUSOLEUM, AND WE WILL GO INSIDE. THERE WILL BE A MEMORIAL. FOR NOW, WE DRINK, AND TALK.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS?

I... I KNEW IT WHEN I CAME TO THIS PLACE.
IT WAS LIKE THE WAY ONE KNOWS THINGS IN DREAMS...
... WHERE YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE A SECRET AGENT, OR THAT YOUR BROTHER IS TRYING TO KILL YOU, OR THAT THE EGG IN YOUR HAND WILL SOON HATCH INTO A PHOTOGRAPH OF YOUR TRUE LOVE...

Y'KNOW, BIRDIE, TALKIN' TO DREAMERS IS LIKE TALKIN' TO ZOMBIES OR SUMP'N. I DON'T KNOW WHY YA EVEN TRY.

MERVYN?

YO.

YOU'RE DEAD.

NOPE, IT AIN'T *MY* FUNERAL. NEVER FELT BETTER.

HIC

YOU'RE **DEAD**, GOD**DAMN** IT! YOU WERE DESTROYED BY THE KINDLY ONES!

YOU WERE BLOWN TO FRIGGIN' *BITS!*

SO?

YOU'RE NOT MERV.

NOT MERV. ***RIIIGHT.*** SO WHAT AM I IF I'M NOT ME, HUH?

CHOPPED LIVER? HEH-HEHHEHHEH...

CHOPPED LIVER. HEH. I KILL MYSELF.

YOU GOIN' TO STICK AROUND FOR THE WAKE?

SO WHY ***AREN'T*** YOU DEAD?

HE BROUGHT ME BACK.

WHO?

HIZZONNA DREAM A' THE ENDLESS. WHO ***ELSE?***

HEY! BIRD! YOU WANNA ***DRINK?***

SCREW YOU.

ANYONE HERE?

I am here, Matthew.

Should you not be at the ceremony?

WHAT CEREMONY? ALL I SAW WAS A SHITLOAD OF PEOPLE I DIDN'T KNOW AND A BOMBED PUMPKIN.

Tonight is the wake, Matthew. Tomorrow, the funeral.

WELL? SHOULDN'T YOU BE DOWN THERE THEN? YOU CAN SWAN AROUND, BE IMPORTANT, THE NEWKING OF THE HILL--

Matthew. You were my friend.

I WAS HIS FRIEND. I'M NOT YOUR ANYTHING.

This is very new to me, Matthew.

This place. This world.

I have existed since the beginning of time. This is a true thing. I am older than worlds and suns and gods.

But tomorrow I will meet my brother and sisters for the first time. And I am afraid.

ALL FINGS CONSIDERED, 'E WAS A **FUNNY** OLD BARSTARD.

NEVER **QUITE** AS HOITY-TOITY AS 'E MADE 'IMSELF ART TO BE, IF YOU ARSK **ME**.

I'D SEE HIM EVERY NOW AND AGEN, OVER THE YEARS, (MOSTLY IN OLD COMPTON STREET WHICH IS MY PERTIC'LER VENUE), AND I'D **ALWAYS** BID 'IM GOODMORROW, AND 'E WOS **NEVER** TOO BUSY TER STOP FOR A LITTLE NATTER.

'ERE, YOU 'URRY UP WITH THAT THERE BOTTLE.

THERE'S SOME US WOT 'AVEN'T **HAD** ANY YET.

ULLO, SAYS 'E, AND 'OWS YER RHEUMATICS THEN, HENRIETTA? COS HE'D NEVER CALL ME MAD HETTIE, THOUGH ONCE I ALMOST ARSKED HIM TO.

MUSTN'T GRUMBLE, I'D SAY TER HIM, POSH AS ANYFINK, BUT WIV WINTER COMING HAI DON'T RIGHTLY KNOW 'OW A HOLD LADY HOV AN 'UNDRED HAND FIFTY (OR WHATEVER I AKCHERLY WOS, THAT DAY) HIS GOIN' TER KEEP BODY HAN SOUL TOGETHER. HAI REELY DON'T.

AN' WIV **THAT** 'E'D NOD, AND 'E'D TAKE A COIN FROM NOWHERE AND DROP IT IN ME PALM.

SOMETIMES A ROMAN COIN, OR A GOLD DOUBLOON, OR SOMEFINK **JUST** AS PERCU-LIAR, AND I'D BOB HIM A COURTESY--

--SO--

I'D GO THANK'EE KINDLY, BUT I **NEVER** SO MUCH AS TRIED TO SPEND A **ONE** OF THE COINS HE GIVE ME, ALL 'IDDEN AWAY THEY ARE, SAFE AS HOUSES TO THIS VERY DAY.

AND THEN 'E'D TURN TER GO ON HIS WAY, AND E'D WISH ME *PLEASANT DREAMS*, AND I'D SAY TER HIM, *WELL, SONNY-JIM, THAT'S RARVER UP TER YOU, ISN'T IT?*

HE LIKED THAT. I COULD SEE 'E LIKED THAT.

THEN E'D GO ORF ON 'IS WAY. I NEVER REALLY KNEW IF HE WAS LARFING AT ME OR NOT.

BUT, WHEN ALL'S SAID AND DONE, 'E WAS *ALL RIGHT.*

POOR OLD BUGGER.

YOU ARE ***BROODING***, MY SISTER. IT IS NOT ***GOOD*** TO BROOD.

I AM SAYING MY GOODBYES, MY BROTHER.

IF ***I*** HAD NOT LOVED HIM, ***HE*** WOULD NOT HAVE DIED.

IT WAS NOT ***YOUR*** FAULT THAT HE DIED.

NO.

BUT I LOVED HIM AS DEEPLY AND AS WELL AS ANY MAN WAS LOVED BY A WOMAN.

AND ***BECAUSE*** I LOVED HIM, HE IS DEAD.

AND I HAVE LEFT FAERIE, CERTAIN OF BUT ***ONE*** THING: THAT THE WORDS OF YOUR POEM WILL COME TRUE FOR ME. "*BE SURE YOUR SINS WILL FIND YOU OUT,*" EH, MY BROTHER?

NOT ONE OF ***MY*** POEMS, INDEED: A RATHER TRITE SENTIMENT.

DO NOT LIE TO ***ME***, CLURACAN.

YOU CAME TO ME THREE TIMES, DISGUISED AS A BOGGART, AND YOU TOLD ME YOUR POEM. OF ***COURSE*** IT WAS YOU: YOU REMOVED YOUR GLAMOUR FROM ME, AT THE END, AND THERE'S NOT A ONE OF US THAT CAN REMOVE A GLAMOUR PLACED BY ANOTHER.

I HAD ***WONDERED*** ABOUT THAT. BUT I HAVE ***BEEN*** NO BOGGART, ***NOR*** HAVE I MADE A POEM FOR YOU.

AND IF THIS IS NOT ONE OF THOSE ECHOES OF MY TIME IN THE INN... I MUST CONFESS MYSELF BEWILDERED.

YOUR PUZZLEMENT IS EASILY ENOUGH DISPELLED, THE CLURACAN. IT WAS *I* WHO MADE THE POEM; AND A BRAVE POEM IT WAS AT THAT, AND A ***WARNING***, HAD SHE BUT HEEDED IT.

AND I IT WAS WHO LIFTED THE GLAMOUR FROM HER-- FOR SHE ASKED SO GENTLY MY HEART TWISTED WITHIN ME...

WHAT ***ARE*** YOU?

PERHAPS YOU'D KNOW ME BETTER WITH ***THESE***, MY BROTHER.

UM. ***NO***. NOT REALLY. YOU ***LOOK*** LIKE ME--***NOT*** AS GOOD-LOOKING, AND THERE'S SOMETHING A LITTLE ODD ABOUT THE NOSE, BUT ENOUGH LIKE ME TO FOOL THOSE WHO HADN'T MADE SUCH A STUDY OF MY FACE AS I HAVE--ONLY WITH THE HORNS OF A STAG.

I'VE NOT WORN ANTLERS SINCE TH' ELEVENTH CENTURY, AND I'M NO CUCKOLD...

I SUPPOSE, WITH TOO MUCH WINE, ***ALL*** THINGS ARE POSSIBLE, THOUGH THE THOUGHT OF IT MAKES ME A LITTLE UNEASY TO ME STOMACH: YE'D NOT BE MY ***SON***, WOULD YE?

CLOSE, THE CLURACAN, BUT ONLY IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING. IT WAS HERE YOU SPAWNED ME. *I* AM YOUR NEMESIS.

OH.

AREN'T YOU MEANT TO BE BUSILY TRYING TO DESTROY ME, OR SOMETHING?

AT A ***WAKE***? ***WHERE*** WOULD BE THE MANNERS IN ME IF I TRIED SUCH A THING? NO, IT'S MY OWN SWEET TIME ABOUT THE TASK I'LL BE TAKING.

AND IT ***WON'T*** BE IN THE DREAMING, WHERE *I* WAS BORN, NOR IN ***FAERIE***, WHERE ***YOU*** BEGAN, BUT IN THE WIDE WORLDS BETWEEN I'LL COME FOR YOU, HIDE AND RUN HOW YOU MAY.

THERE NOW, I'M OFF TO PAY MY RESPECTS. I'LL SEE YEZ, SIRRAH, IN THE BYE-AND-BYE.

YE'D HAVE TO TRAVEL HARD AND LONG TO FIND ANYONE WHO EVER GOT THE BETTER OF CLURACAN. AND YOU DON'T SCARE ME, SIR. NOT ONE JOT NOR TITTLE.

IF THERE'S A BOTTLE ABOUT, OR A CASK, OR A BARREL, I'D NOT BE SAYING NO TO A SWIG OR THREE.

HERE YOU GO. THIS ONE'S ON ME.

WHAT KIND OF WAKE IS THIS, WITH NO MUSIC, AND NO DANCING AND NO SONGS?

YOU, SIR, YOU'RE A FIDDLE-PLAYER.

AYUH?

OF COURSE! THE FINEST THAT EVER DREW HORSE-HAIR TO A CAT-GUT!

COME ON, YE SLUBBERDEGULLIONS! LET'S GIVE THE DEPARTED A WAKE WE'LL NOT FORGET IN A HURRY!

NOW PLAY, MISTER FIDDLER! PLAY!

MY ASSOCIATION WITH THE LORD SHAPER?

THAT IS NONE OF YOUR AFFAIR. I AM THE QUEEN OF FAERIE. I KEEP MY OWN COUNSEL.

AND AS FOR MY MEMORIES OF THE LORD SHAPER ... I HAVE NO DESIRE TO SHARE THEM WITH ANY OTHER INDIVIDUAL.

THEY ARE *MY* MEMORIES, AFTER ALL.

AND NO MORE TO BE SHARED THAN I IMAGINE THE LORD SHAPER'S MEMORIES OF ME WOULD HAVE BEEN, WERE HE ALIVE, WERE I DEAD.

I saved your life once, Matthew. Not long ago.

It should have been your blood spilled on the throne of the Dream-King. The Corinthian was to have killed you.

SO WHY DIDN'T HE?

Because I did not wish it. I summoned the Nybbas; I changed the Corinthian's mind.

BULLSHIT. YOU WERE ONLY A BABY WHEN THAT WAS GOING ON.

And you were once a man, Matthew. Were you entirely without power, even then?

IT'S NOT THE SAME.

No?

Before I died, I told me many things...

I tell you true. I saved your life. Would you prefer that I had let the blood on the throne be yours?

MAYBE.

CAN YOU SEND ME ON? TO WHEREEVER IT IS THAT RAVENS GO WHEN THEY'VE HAD ENOUGH?

Of course.

NOW?

After tonight's wake, Matthew; after tomorrow's ceremony. Come to me then. If you still wish to move on, I shall not prevent you. It shall occur.

...OKAY.

WILL IT HURT?

NOT AT THE SHINDIG EITHER, EH?

WE ARE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GATE, MATTHEW. WHAT KIND OF GUARDIANS WOULD WE BE WERE WE TO LEAVE? EVEN ON THIS NIGHT.

WE WERE GIVEN ***PERMISSION*** TO LEAVE OUR POSTS. WE ***ELECTED*** TO STAY.

AND HE BROUGHT ***YOU*** BACK TO LIFE ***TOO***, EH? THAT FIGURES.

NO, MY LORD.

I WAS HATCHED AND RAISED IN THE MOUNTAINS OF ARIMASPIA, A ***LONG*** WAY FROM HERE, FAR BEYOND THE DREAMING.

THE DREAM-KING SENT TO THE QUEEN OF ALL GRYPHONS FOR THE NOBLEST AND BRAVEST OF HER SUBJECTS AND, AFTER CERTAIN CONTESTS OF STRENGTH AND WIT, THE HONOR FELL TO ***ME***.

I HOPE I CAN BE AS VALIANT AS THE GRYPHON WHO CAME BEFORE ME.

YOUR PREDECESSOR, HE TOLD ME THERE **WEREN'T** ANY GRYPHONS LEFT IN THE WAKING WORLD.

ARIMASPIA IS AS **FAR** FROM THE WAKING WORLD AS IT IS FROM THE DREAMING, GREAT LORD.

BUT HE DIDN'T **NEED** TO GET A NEW GRYPHON. HE COULD HAVE JUST BROUGHT THE OLD ONE **BACK**, COULDN'T HE?

YES, LORD.

DON'T CALL ME LORD.

NO, LORD.

HEY. IT'S LYTA HALL, ISN'T IT?

MM.

ROSE. ROSE **WALKER.** YOU REMEMBER ME. WOSIE, I WAS YOUR BABYSITTER. WHEN DANNY WENT MISSING.

MM.

I KEPT EXPECTING YOU OR CARLA TO GET BACK IN TOUCH... 'FRAID I KIND OF GOT INVOLVED IN **MY** OWN SHIT.

BUT I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT YOU A LOT. WENT UPSTAIRS A FEW TIMES WHEN I GOT BACK TO L.A., BUT NOBODY EVER ANSWERED THE DOOR.

MM.

SO. HOW'S **CARLA?**

I DON'T KNOW.

AND **DANNY?**

I BELIEVE... I UNDERSTAND... THAT HE'S...

...FINE.

OH. **GOOD.** THAT'S **GOOD.**

ALL THIS **PARTY** STUFF EVERYWHERE. DO YOU KNOW WHO IT'S **FOR?**

A MONSTER. THEY ARE CELEBRATING THE DEATH OF A MONSTER.

UM, LYTA. THIS IS MY BROTHER JED. **HE'S** IN THIS DREAM TOO.

HEY.

MM.

YOU KNOW, I'M PREGNANT. NOT HARDLY VERY PREGNANT AT ALL, BUT I AM.

REALLY?

UH-HUH.

KILL IT, ROSE WALKER. KILL IT NOW.

KILL IT BEFORE IT BREAKS YOUR HEART.

I, UH...

I DON'T *THINK* SO.

GOOD *SEEING* YOU. SAY *HI* TO CARLA FOR ME.

ROSIE? IS *THAT* THE ONE YOU WERE TELLING ME ABOUT? IN *L.A.?* UPSTAIRS?

UH-HUH.

WEIRD. SHE AND HER OLD MAN USED TO LIVE IN MY HEAD.

JED, DO DREAMS *ALWAYS* GET THIS PECULIAR WHEN YOU'RE PREGNANT?

UH...

RHETORICAL QUESTION, DUMMY.

HEY! EVE!

YES, DEAR?

I'M GOING BACK TO THE CAVE.

AS YOU WILL.

HE SAYS HE SAVED MY LIFE. THAT THE CORINTHIAN WAS GOING TO KILL ME, AND HE MADE IT SO THAT IT WAS THE NYBASS-THING INSTEAD.

THEN I'M SURE HE DID. HE HAS NO REASON TO LIE TO YOU.

MATTHEW? DEAR FELLOW. WILL YOU JOIN US IN A SMALL LIBATION?

YOU KNOW I DON'T DRINK, LUCIEN.

NEITHER DO I, ON ANY NORMAL OCCASION. BUT TONIGHT IS FAR FROM NORMAL.

DO YOU KNOW BHARTARI RAJA? THIS IS THE BHARTARI RAJA. OLD OLD FRIEND OF MINE. BHARTARI, MATTHEW.

PLEASE, NO. NOT BHARTARI, LUCIEN. I AM PRESENTLY LIVING UNDER THE NAME OF SILAS TOMKEN CUMBERBATCH, LIKE WINNIE THE POOH AND MISTER SAUNDERS.

HERE, SIR RAVEN, WET YOUR BLACK BEAK ON THIS.

I DON'T DRINK.

I STOPPED DRINKING THE HARD WAY.

"THE NIGHT CAN MAKE A MAN MORE BRAVE..."

"... BUT NOT MORE SOBER." I TAKE YOUR POINT.

LUCIEN?

WHY DID IT HAPPEN? WHY DID HE LET IT HAPPEN?

LET IT, MATTHEW? I THINK HE DID A LITTLE MORE THAN LET IT HAPPEN...

CHARITABLY... I THINK... SOMETIMES, PERHAPS, ONE MUST CHANGE OR DIE.

AND, IN THE END, THERE WERE, PERHAPS, LIMITS TO HOW MUCH HE COULD LET HIMSELF CHANGE.

THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE ENOUGH ROOM FOR MEN IN MY LIFE.

I WENT THROUGH THAT PHASE OF MY CAREER *QUITE* SOME TIME AGO, AND WAS PLEASED TO BE DONE WITH IT.

I THINK, AT FIRST, I SAW HIM AS A WORTHY ANTAGONIST. SOMEONE TO DISLIKE.

AND HE, FOR *HIS* PART, SEEMED TO LIKE MEETING SOMEONE WHO WAS NOT AWED AND WAS NOT COWED BY HIM.

AND I WAS NEITHER.

I KNEW THAT, WHATEVER HE TRULY WAS, I WOULD NEVER PERCEIVE HIM AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN A RATHER BROODING AND SELF-ABSORBED YOUNG MAN...

AND TOO *THIN*...

STILL, SOME MONTHS AFTER OUR ENCOUNTER IN THE SKERRY, I DREAMED OF HIM. I DID NOT *WISH* TO DO SO, AND I DO NOT THINK THAT HE WAS PLEASED BY MY ARRIVAL IN HIS WORLD. BUT HIS MANNERS WERE GOOD, AND WE BEGAN A CONVERSATION, WHICH STRETCHED OVER MANY WEEKS.

AND, AT THE END, HE INVITED ME TO REMAIN IN THE DREAMING, AS A GUEST.

I *ASTONISHED* MYSELF BY SAYING YES.

HE BEGAN, RATHER GENTLY, RATHER NERVOUSLY, TO COURT ME. AND I BEGAN, ALSO RATHER NERVOUSLY, TO BE COURTED.

AND WE WERE BOTH, INITIALLY, EXTREMELY HAPPY.

HE *LOVED* ME. I DO NOT *DOUBT* THAT.

IN HINDSIGHT, I DO *NOT* BELIEVE THAT *I* LOVED HIM: I SIMPLY FELT HIS LOVE FOR ME, BURNING AND ALL-CONSUMING, AND REFLECTED IT BACK, AS THE COLD LIGHT OF THE MOON REFLECTS THE LIGHT OF THE SUN.

I DID NOT *KNOW* THAT, AT THE TIME. I THOUGHT I LOVED HIM.

GRADUALLY, HIS INTEREST IN ME WANED, ALTHOUGH I DOUBT HE REALIZED IT.

HE *HAD* ME, AFTER ALL; HE HAD INSTALLED ME IN HIS WORLD, IN HIS CASTLE. HE NO *LONGER* NEEDED TO WOO ME; AND AND HE RETURNED TO WORK. TO HIS DUTIES.

I WAS *THERE* WHEN HE WANTED ME. IT WAS... ENOUGH FOR HIM.

AND WHEN THE LIGHT OF HIS LOVE WAS *OFF* ME, I REALIZED THAT I DID NOT LOVE HIM, AND I HAD *NEVER* LOVED HIM.

I WENT TO HIM, I SPOKE TO HIM. HE SAID... NOTHING.

I *SHOUTED* AT HIM, ASKED HIM *WHY* HE DIDN'T EVEN ASK ME TO STAY, *WHY* HE CARED MORE ABOUT HIS *WORK* THAN *ME*, ASKED HIM WHY HE WOULDN'T EVEN *TALK* ABOUT IT.

HE *SHRUGGED*.

AND I TOLD HIM I WAS LEAVING, AND HE NODDED, AND SAID, "AS YOU WILL," AND HIS VOICE WAS AS COLD AS COLD.

AND I LEFT THE DREAMING THAT DAY, AND WENT BACK TO REAL LIFE.

AND I SWORE...

I SWORE I WOULD NEVER SHED ANOTHER TEAR FOR HIM.

ODD? AS ODD AS THE DREAMS WHERE I'M A NEWSREADER. OR THE ONE WHERE I'VE GOT AN ANT'S HEAD. OR WHERE I'M A GORILLA.

ONCE I DREAMED I HAD THIS WEIRD VIRUS AND I HAD TO KEEP GOING FORWARD IN TIME UNTIL THE END OF THE UNIVERSE...

THE ONE I HATE IS WHERE I'M JUST AN ACTOR ON A STRANGE TELEVISION VERSION OF MY LIFE.

HAVE YOU EVER HAD THAT DREAM?

DOESN'T EVERYONE?

I DON'T.

NICE TRENCH COAT.

THANKS.

SOMETIMES I GET AN IDEA IN MY HEAD. YOU KNOW? LIKE ALL THE STUFF YOU'VE DONE BEFORE... I ONCE WORKED OUT THAT I'D SPENT OVER SIX YEARS ALL TOLD, JUST PISSING. SIX YEARS OF PISS.

THAT'S A LOT OF PISS.

LOT OF PISS UNDER THE BRIDGE.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

I AM OLD, AS CENTAURS RECKON AGE. AND WE ARE A LONG-LIVED PEOPLE.

YEAH? WELL, I'M OLD AS PEOPLE RECKON AGE, AND WE'RE NOT.

TALKING ABOUT PISSING, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO 'SCUSE ME A MOMENT.

HELLO, MATTHEW.

HELLO. LET'S SEE: YOU TWO I KNOW. DELIRIUM... DEATH.

I THOUGHT YOU ONLY WORE BLACK.

NOT TODAY.

YOU MUST BE... LET'S SEE: DESIRE. DESPAIR. DESTINY.

AND, UHM... DOG?

Barnabas. And the guy in the white robe over there is apparently called Eblis O'Shaughnessy. Don't ask.

WHAT ARE YOU ALL DOING UP HERE?

WE BUILT THE REMEMBERING-PLACE.

AND TONIGHT WE'VE BEEN SITTING HERE IN THE HEART OF THE DREAMING.

I THOUGHT THE CASTLE WAS THE HEART OF THE DREAMING.

FIDDLER'S GREEN WAS ALSO THE HEART OF THE DREAMING;

AND WHERE IT ONCE WAS IS WHERE WE NOW STAND.

ARE YOU TELLING ME THE DREAMING HAS TWO HEARTS?

MORE THAN THAT, LITTLE BRAVE BIRD.

MANY, MANY MORE THAN THAT.

MATTHEW. YOU WERE CLOSE TO OUR BROTHER...

NOBODY WAS CLOSE TO YOUR BROTHER. NOT UNLESS YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT ASTRONOMICAL DISTANCES... Y'KNOW--THE SUN IS CLOSE TO ALPHA CENTAURI...

HE... HE WASN'T VERY GOOD AT CLOSE.

THERE IS A MEMORIAL, LATER TODAY. WILL YOU SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT OUR BROTHER?

DO I HAVE ANY CHOICE?

OF COURSE YOU DO. YOU CAN REFUSE.

...OKAY.

I'LL DO IT.

WHERE DID THEY GO?

THEY HAVE GONE TO TAKE UP THEIR POSITIONS.

THE SUN IS RISING.

HEH!

A dog biscuit for your thoughts.

JUST REMEMBERING A BOOK I READ A LONG TIME AGO. TOM SAWYER.

THERE'S A BIT IN IT WHERE THESE KIDS TURN UP HALFWAY THROUGH THEIR OWN FUNERAL.

I WAS JUST THINKING. MAYBE HE'LL WALK IN HALFWAY THROUGH THE SERVICE.

The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated, Matthew,

HE'LL SAY.

That was good. Sounded just like him.

THANKS.

WOULDN'T THAT BE JUST LIKE HIM? TO TURN UP, HALFWAY THROUGH?

Not really.

NO...

C'MON. THERE'S GONNA BE A FEW BILLION PEOPLE HERE TODAY. WE BETTER GET IN EARLY IF WE WANT TO GET A GOOD SEAT.

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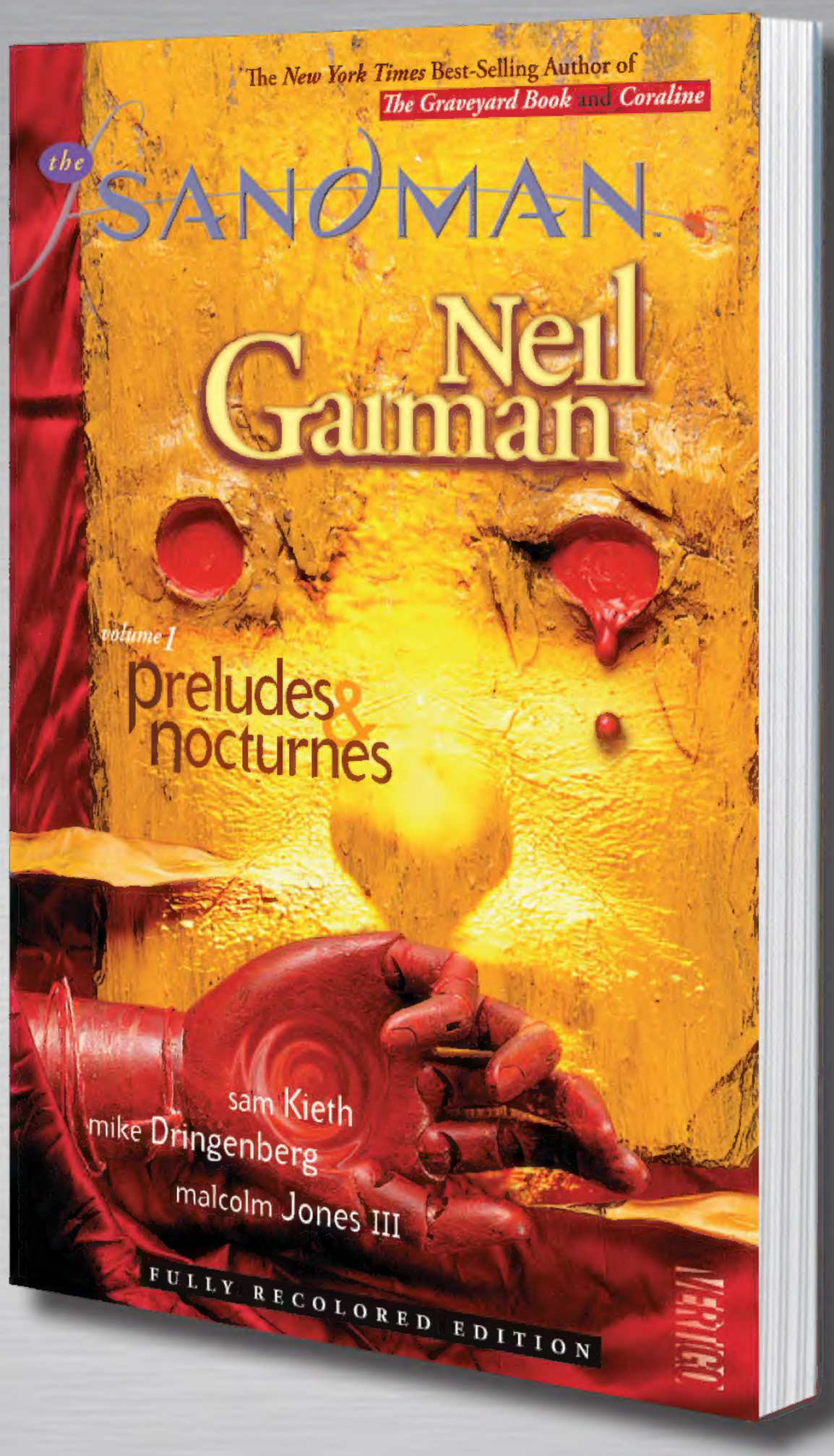
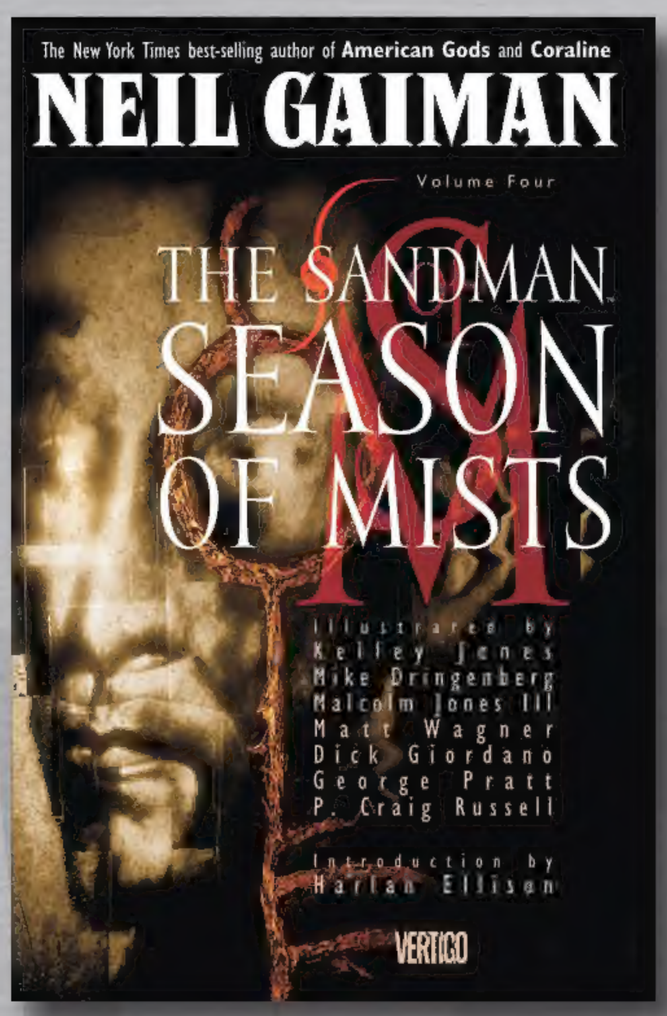
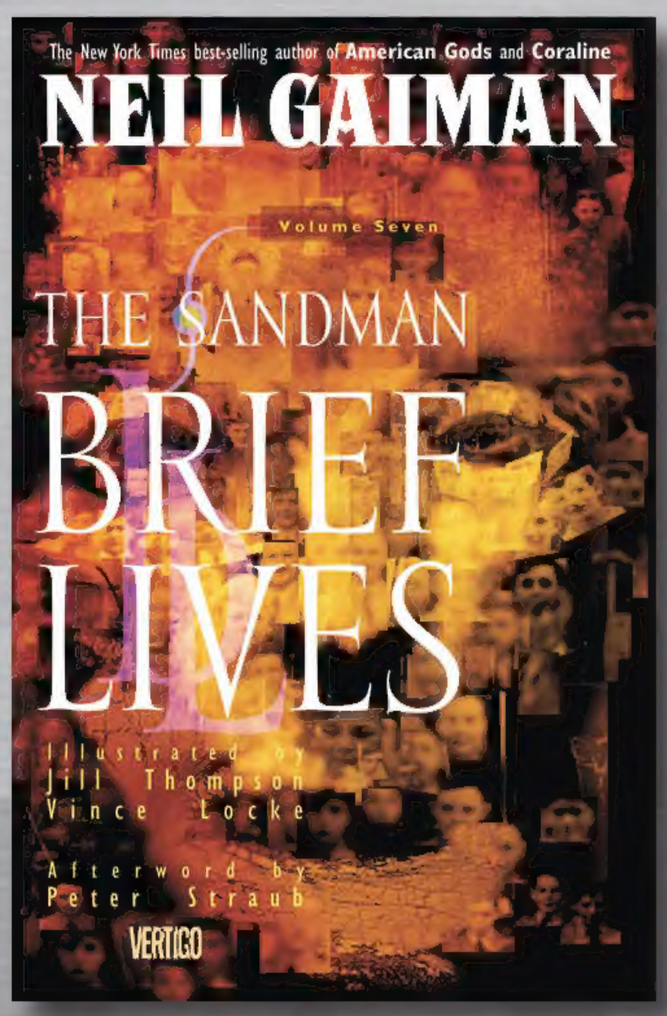


THE SANDMAN VOL. 4: SEASON OF MISTS



THE SANDMAN VOL. 7: BRIEF LIVES



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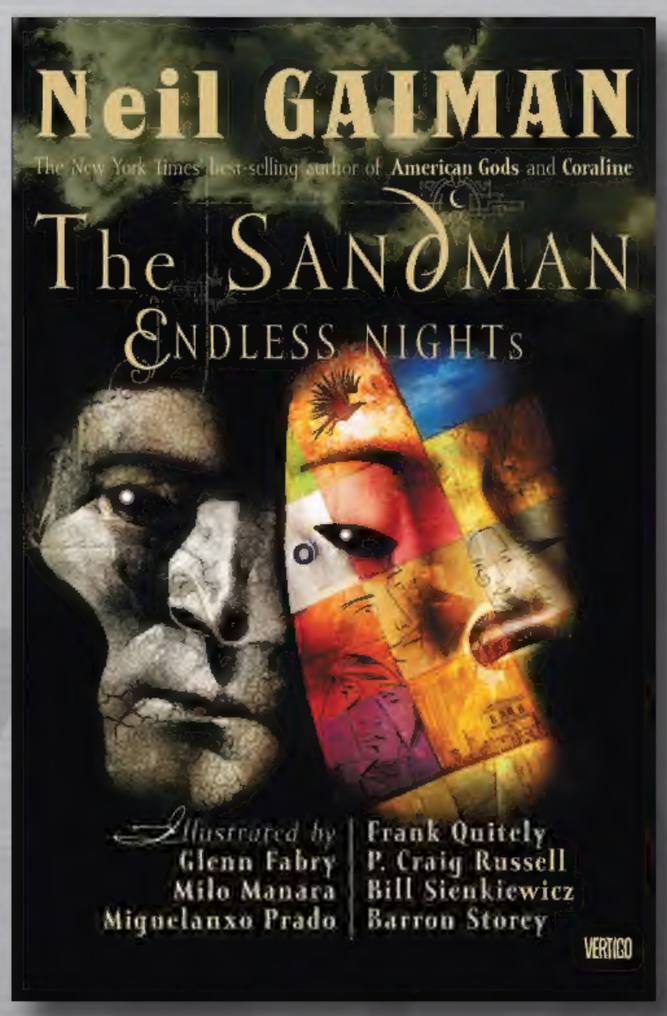

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